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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an exchange-theory view of school authority relations in order to identify patterns of coupling, or interdependencies, within school organizations and to analyze the potential for tighter coupling of administrative and teaching subsystems. The analysis proceeds from an argument that the social-exchange view of administrative power is particularly suited to describing and comparing loosely-coupled organizations. Variables relevant to exchange potential are identified as sources of variation in the coupling patterns within such organizational systems. This general exchange framework offers propositions regarding variation in school organization within the United States educational system and effects of general institutional trends, most notably, declining public support of education and system centralization. The analysis suggests gradual drift toward enhanced informal exchange and interdependence at the local school level and, by implication, tighter coupling of the educational administration and teaching subsystems. (Author)

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SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: EXCHANGE AND POWER IN LOOSELY COUPLED SYSTEMS

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Abstract

This paper presents an exchange-theory view of school authority relations in order to identify patterns of coupling, or interdependencies, within school organizations and to analyze the potential for tighter coupling of administrative and teaching subsystems. The analysis proceeds from an argument that the social-exchange view of administrative power is particularly suited to describing and comparing loosely-coupled organizations. Variables relevant to exchange potential are identified as sources of variation in the coupling patterns within such organizational systems.

This general exchange framework offers propositions regarding variation in school organization within the U.S. educational system and effects of general institutional trends, most notably declining public support of education and system centralization. The analysis suggests gradual drift toward enhanced informal exchange and interdependence at the local school level and, by implication, tighter coupling of the educational administration and teaching subsystems.

Recent trends in U.S. educational policy and broader public sentiments are placing increasing pressure schools to account for their instructional activities. The school accountability demands assume that educational activities and outcomes can and should be centrally controlled, much as manufacturing processes are controlled in business firms. This rationalist model implies conceptions of educational processes and of school organization which are clearly out of synch with institutional realities. The policies challenge educational ideologies or beliefs widely held by teachers (cf., Wise, 1979: 93-94) and cast school administrators in an instructional-manager role inconsistent with established authority relations (cf., March, 1978). In light of current organizational realities it is highly unlikely that the principal will act to enforce central bureaucratic authority over teaching activities in the local school. As Arthur Wise summarizes the situation in Legislated Learning (1979):

> Policy makers create policies which are consistent with the rationalistic model and which would work if the model were a good representation of school reality ... the policies do not work as intended because educators are unwilling or unable to accommodate their behavior to the model (93-94).
>
> New policies which hold schools accountable for attaining specified goals may have no effect upon the process of education if the elements of the school system are only loosely coupled (p. 93).

Yet, Wise and other observers of the centralization trend in U.S. education recognize that policy and fiscal developments may gradually alter institutional patterns at the local level. Analysts differ in their prognoses and estimates of critical levels of change. Arguments center on the likelihood

of tighter evaluation and sanctioning systems (cf. Wilkes et al., 1979, for the pro-side; Meyer, 1978, for the con-side), or of tighter control by instructional rules and routines (Wise, 1979). As yet, there is no empirical evidence that such bureaucratic-control structures are determining instructional practices at the local school level. Substantial increase in formal, organizational control of U.S. education is likely to proceed slowly indeed. The impact of centralized accountability pressures on the local school system is likely to be mediated by existing institutional patterns.

This paper offers a model of local school authority relations which fits the institutional patterns observed for the U.S. system and which suggests a possible mechanism for more centralized control of educational practices. First I review the literature on institutional patterns of authority and centrally-planned educational change. Next I review the exchange-theory approach to organizational authority relations. The view is contrasted with other organizational perspectives on authority and control, and its particular relevance and use for analyzing loosely-coupled systems are suggested. Finally, I use the model to characterize routine, or institutionalized, school authority relations and to suggest ways in which changing conditions of U.S. education may enhance the potential for administrators to influence instructional activities. From the social-exchange perspective, centralized policy and accountability pressures may increase interdependence between principals' and teachers' roles. This enhanced power of local administrators is seen as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition of centralized control of the educational process.

Institutional Patterns

Literature on both the culture and the structure of U.S. public schooling point to institutionalized obstacles to administrative, or bureacratic, control of instruction. Sarason's (1971) classic study of the school social

system identified barriers to principals' involvement in teaching activities. He emphasizes that principals avoid taking an educational leader role, in spite of their potential influence on instruction. Their reluctance is based in the institutionalized division of labor in schools and in administrator recruitment patterns.

Principals and teachers generally claim separate domains of authority and responsibility. School administrators have been in charge of building operations and program structures and rarely do they scrutinize instructional activities (cf. Dornbusch and Scott, 1975; March, 1978; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Meyer et al., 1978). Teachers generally have taken responsibility for educational processes taking place within the confines of isolated classrooms, and the occupational culture defines administrators' involvement as a challenge to professional rights of autonomy. Further, since principals are generally recruited from the teaching ranks, they are socialized to these norms of nonintrusion. In effect, the school culture constrains principal involvement in the core educational activities of the teaching staff.

Structural analyses of the U.S. public school system also highlight the low interdependence between system levels. They locate the school culture within broader organizational system and offer a similarly pessimistic prognosis regarding the potential for enhanced administrative control of instruction.

A growing literature on educational organization points to the "loosely coupled" nature of governance structures (cf., Weick, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1977: Meyer et al., 1978). The loose-coupling notion refers especially to the low coordination among specialized units within the system. Presumably, low interdependence of work activities allows parts of the system to manage their own special problems and contingencies. For example, state policy makers and central school administrators can respond to political pressures

for educational change without seriously disrupting local school operations; and teachers can revise their instructional practices without disrupting the work of other teachers and without seeking approval through bureaucratic or political channels. In effect, the relative autonomy of system parts allows for adaptation to changing, short-term demands without high coordination costs.

John Meyer notes that the current centralization trend has proliferated units at the middle level of the system, as the bureaucracy has established coordinating mechanisms for programs and policies. (Meyer, 1978) There is no evidence, however, that such change has increased coordination within the system. The added complexity even may have decreased interdependence at local levels, in part because record-keeping has become a central administrative role -- leaving less time for attention to instructional activities.

The loose-coupling perspective draws attention to regularities in educational organizations which depart from typical conditions of business firms. While these business firms manage tight coordination around technical production systems and performance control based upon operational standards of productivity, the U.S. public school system generally lacks such bases of coordination and control. Further, attempts to introduce tightly coordinated instructional programs and tigher evaluation systems have generally failed, or at least fallen considerably short of the rational-organizational model (cf. Sussman, 1977; Wilkes, et al., 1979). Wise's (1979) recent analysis of changes in U.S. education catalogues these attempts and also notes the schools' resistance to central, bureaucratic reform.

Research on school implementation of centrally designed and evaluated instructional programs has revealed two institutional patterns of responses to central educational mandates. First, new and complex instructional programs are generally aborted or significantly altered at the local school level

(cf. Sussman, 1977; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977). Technical models of instruction seem to be resisted generally by classroom teachers (cf. Wolcott, 1977); and principals are either unwilling or unable to act as change agents on behalf of higher educational authorities (see Wolcott's, 1973 point that principals serve to maintain continuity in the schools).

A second pattern suggests that departures from the nonimplementation syndrome depend critically on the principal's role. Evaluation studies (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Deal et al., 1976; Thomas, 1978) indicate that few factors other than variation among school principals account for patterns of failure and success in planned educational change. This observation suggests that the effect of central instructional policy on school operations is critically mediated by internal and variable, school authority relations. Central mandates do not, by themselves, increase instructional coordination or effect educational reform throughout the system. This pattern suggests that tighter coupling within the U.S. system is likely to depend upon enhanced interdependence between teachers and local school administration. The departure from institutionalized authority relations apparently occurs in some schools. However, the basis of principal influence and conditions conducive to enhanced administrative power are not suggested by standard analyses of school organization

An exchange-theory view of the school social system emphasizes the potential for increased principal-teacher interdependence. The view suggests informal bases of principal power within the context of institutionalized, loosely-coupled authority relations. Enhanced principal control of instruction could derive from an increase in exchange potential and exchange-based power within the U.S. system. Whether or not most principals would channel power resources in the instructional-control direction

is a separate question to be raised in the final section of the paper. The following section describes briefly the exchange-theory perspective on organizational authority. General conditions and variables relevant to superior-subordiante exchange are noted so that exchange processes and potential in the schools can be identified.

Authority and Exchange

Peter Blau's Exchange and Power in Social Life (1964) offers a compelling argument that organizational authority always must be supported by informal exchange relations between superiors and subordinates. Blau argues that:

> The managerial authority that is rooted in the employment contract itself is very limited in scope. It only obligates employees to perform duties assigned to them in accordance with minimal standards. This formal authority does not require them to devote much effort to their work, exercise initiative in carrying it out, or be guided in their performance by the suggestions of superiors. Effective management is not possible within the confines of formal authority alone (1964: 206).

The social exchange perspective on organizational authority directs attention to administrative power which is not specified by formal contract or enforced by organization structures (i.e., policy and rules or a formal sanctioning system).

Blau's analysis extends the social-psychological literature on social exchange processes (cf. Homan, 1958, 1961) to formally-structured relationships in organizations. The basic model uses principles of behaviorist psycholgy to analyze social relations as mutual reinforcement systems, wherein each party depends upon the relationship for obtaining valued resources. Each party's dependence represents the other's power in the relationship, and power-dependence levels presumably move toward balance (see Emerson, 1962, 1967, for a formal presentation of these ideas). The principle that a "norm of

reciprocity" regulates social relations (Gouldner, 1960) allows Blau to argue that administrators can augment their formal authority through social exchange processes. Most simply, subordinates feel the need to reciprocate when their superior contributes to their well being.

In this view, the extent of employee work involvement and compliance with administrative directives is determined by informally-negotiated "norms of fair exchange." The superior presumably manages the negotiation because he or she is in a position to control organizational resources of potential value to subordinates. The resource control derives from both formal, administrative prerogatives and strategic location in the organizational system. The position typically affords access to, or control of, a range of organizational resources, including information not available to subordinates.

Exchange-based power contrasts sharply with formal sauctioning power, though the latter may serve as a resource in establishing the exchange relationship. As Blau argues:

> A manager may extend his control over subordinates by resorting to his sanctioning power to impose his will upon them, promising rewards for conformity and threatening penalties for disobediance. An alternative strategy a manager can use is to provide services to subordinates that obligate them to comply with his directives. His formal power over subordinates helps him to create joint obligations, in part simply by refraining from exercising it. In this case, the manager relinquishes some of his official power in exchange for greater legitimate authority over subordinates (1964: 206).

The concept of <u>joint</u> obligations implies that the kind of exchange processes which enhance an administrator's authority are controlled, in part, by the subordinates as a group. In other words, the exchange relationship is viewed as a dyad, rather than a series of individual relations. The dyadic conception stems from Blau's view that a) work

conditions generate common interests and values relevant to organizational exchange b) subordinates commonly evaluate administrators' practices in terms of their values and c) group norms determine the level at which subordinates contribute to their managers. Blau describes the balancing of an exchange relationship as follows:

> When social consensus develops among subordinates that the practices of the manager contribute to their common welfare and that it is in their common interests to maintain his good will by discharging their obligations to him, shared feelings of loyalty and group norms tend to emerge that make compliance with his directives a social obligation that is enforced by the subordinates themselves (Blau, 1964: 207).

The social exchange perspective on authority sees administrators' control of work activities as contingent upon workers' consensus that such control is legitimate. According to this view, such judgments of fairness refer to a superior's demonstrated commitment to subordinate interests. Mutual commitment and administrative authority, thus, emerge through a history of interaction -- rather than through immediate compensation for given compliance costs.

The view suggests that administrators could vary considerably in their controlling of subordinates' work activities, according to the established level of informal exchange. Such variability of administrative control is not predicted by alternative theoretical approaches to authority relations.

Alternative theoretical perspectives

The exchange-theory view of organizational authority and power constrasts sharply with standard economic and bureaucratic models. The former regards the employment contract as an outcome, of rather than a foundation for, negotiations of fair exchange. The contract represents an

"inducement/contributions" balance (March and Simon, 1958), which specifies the rewards, rights and obligations of an organizational members. Within this framework, satisfactory relations with a superior could be one element in the inducements equation, but only at the extremes should it substantially influence employee contributions. For example, if an employee is highly dissatisfied with a superior he or she might negotiate a transfer (change in contract) or terminate the contract. But the model assumes that the nature and level of employee contribution is not significantly determined by the superior-subordinate relationship.

The bureaucratic model (Weber, 1947) specifies organizational structures which regulate work relationships and activities. The model emphasizes the roles of policy and rules, the authority hierarchy, and a formal reward system in directing and coordinating employee efforts. Within the ideal bureaucracy the exercise of authority is highly circumscribed and legitimized by these organizational structures. Authority relations are essentially enactments of formally-specified roles and function to coordinate work activities. According to this model, individuals can be seen as dependent upon those in higher-level positions for directives and rewards. But there is no basis for dependence of superiors on their subordinates, since subordinate compliance with authority directives is assumed. Thus, the potential for interdependence to develop between authority levels through informal exchange processes is ruled out.

The bureaucratic view of organizational authority relations is widely held, in spite of evidence that organizational contexts vary greatly in the degree to which persons in authority positions actually control and coordinate the work activities of those at lower levels. Within some organizational contexts, work activities are coordinated

and controlled by the technical process. Here work roles are either standardized by mechanized production systems or coordinated by the technical requirements and organization of tasks. Technical control, like bureaucratic control, allows for tight coupling of parts of the organizational system -- among individuals within units, across units, and between authority levels. The potential for, and organizational importance of, informal relations between authority levels is highly constrained with both kinds of contexts.

Organizational researchers have identified other contexts, broadly referred to as "loosely-coupled" systems (Weick, 1976), which evidence neither bureaucratic nor technical patterns of control. As noted earlier, educational organizations are classified here. These organizations may appear to represent the bureaucratic control model, since they generally have hierarchical structures and functional divisions or units which are, ostensibly, coordinated. However, as John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) have noted with reference to U.S. schools, formal structure may function more to legitimize an organization to its environment than to manage its core activities. Organizations in a highly bureaucratized society are supposed to operate rationally, i.e., to have established lines of authority and coherence among specialized units. Thus, loosely-coupled organizations tend to be isomorphic structurally, but not functionally, with the bureaucratic model of control. Parts of the organization, including different authority levels, have relatively autonomous domains of activity. Thus, researchers find little supervision or evaluation of the organizations' central work activities and sometimes note that staff norms and administrator disinterest discourage informal relations between authority levels as well.

The economic, bureaucratic and technical models of control specify organizational strategies for "tight coupling" of production activities and outputs and may provide adequate descriptions of administrative power in business firms. In these contexts, the exchange perspective would highlight variation in the degree of coupling, or direct control, among particular authority relationships. However, for loosely-coupled systems, the exchange-theory model of authority should specify the fundamental strategy by which tight coupling could occur and provide an adequate description of the authority relations which could occur. Without established patterns of bureaucratic control or the possibility of directing technically coordinated processes, administrative influence on work activities would depend mainly upon informal power based upon subordinates' trust, loyalty and deference.

As suggested, however, the exchange-theory perspective is likely to reveal generally low levels of resource exchange and interdependence between authority levels within loosely-coupled organizational contexts. The administrators' domains of activity may be all-absorbing and independent of subordinate cooperation. Further, core activities generally have been entrusted to individuals whose work roles are institutionally defined, i.e., by professional or occupational understandings established in the organization's environment. Generally, their authority and autonomy is legitimized by educational credentials. Administrators are likely to trust their "subordinates" and may have little interest in influencing their work activities. "Institutionally-controlled" organizations tend to run smoothly without central bureaucratic, technical, or exchange-based control. However, administrators of loosely-coupled organizations are probably less constrained from generating exchange-based power than are those in other contexts.

The question then becomes: under what conditions would exchange processes and enhanced administrative power develop within loosely-coupled organizations? At least three conditions would have to be satisfied: 1) the administrator would have to perceive a need for greater subordinate cooperation, 2) the administrator would need control over resources of potential value to subordinates and 3) subordinate resistance to enhanced interdependence with administrators would have to be overcome.

Features of the organizational context of authority relations might support or undermine these conditions for enhanced interdependence between loosely-coupled positions. The social-exchange perspective would prove valuable for analyzing authority relations in organizations like schools to the extent that the exchange conditions vary across time or units within the broader organizational context.

Organizational Variables

Unfortunately, there is little empirical work to suggest organizational characteristics conducive to superior-subordinate exchange relations. Case studies provide a few examples of exchange processes between organizational authority levels and suggest the kinds of settings and circumstances which generate informal interdependence between superiors and subordinates. However, comparisons across similar cases are missing from such analyses, and the studies were of organizational contexts which would not be regarded generally as loosely-coupled. Thus, this discussion of exchange-relevant variables is highly speculative. The variables identified refer to organizational conditions represented by the cases and to theoretical propositions from the organizational literature.

A study of inmate-guard relations in prisons (Sykes, 1959) suggests two conditions under which superiors may establish exchange relations in

order to assure subordinate cooperation. Sykes observed that prison guards would ignore routinely the established disciplinary rules in exchange for model inmate behavior during inspections. The inmates benefited from unsanctioned freedoms during normal periods and the guards received favorable evaluations for maintaining order during inspection periods. Presumably, neither party would benefit as much if the guard used formal sanctions to maintain moderate order at all times. The case illustrates Blau's argument that formal sanctioning power may be used as the basis for informal, exchange-based power. Features of the case suggest organizational conditions conducive to such management strategy.

The guard-inmate exchange relationship evolved in a context with 1) relatively high alienation of subordinates from the organization and 2) outsider evaluation of the superior's managerial performance. These features may represent more general conditions under which administrators perceive a need to generate subordinate cooperation through informal exchange processes. We might expect that variation in superior-subordinate interdependence would be found in loosely coupled systems with depressed morale and/or with administrator evaluations by outside parties. At least, administrators would be more dependent upon subordinate cooperation than is typical within loosely-coupled organizations. This dependence could be balanced, and enhanced power legitimized, to the extent that exchange-relevant resources were accessible and subordinates were willing to accept a higher level of interdependence.

However, one notable feature of loosely-coupled systems is their low reliance on rules to govern work activities. Thus, the potential for basing exchange upon indulgency patterns is generally limited within

these contexts. An exception would be where policies or laws are imposed on the organization by regulatory agencies or other "outside" parties, such that administrators could generate subordinate dependence by relaxing the requirements. In effect, enhanced bureaucratic regulation of loosely-coupled organizations would constitute an increase in exchange-relevant resources for administrators within the system. Of course, information about rule-enforcement standards and practices also becomes a valuable, exchange-relevant resource.

Alvin Gouldner's (1954) classic study of management in a gypsum plant suggests other kinds of resource control relevant to exchange. His analysis revealed the extent to which worker control had come to depend upon "Old Doug's" indulgences, such as letting out plant equipment for private use. The case illustrates how a manager's control of material goods or services valued by subordinates can be used to obtain their cooperation. With reference to loosely-coupled systems, access to material resources of value in the private work domain of subordinates may constitute a significant exchange potential. Such access may vary with budget slack and/or administrators' ingenuity in identifying the kinds of resources valued. For instance, an allocation for redecorating offices may or may not ingratiate subordinates. In any case, the degree of discretion allowed for managing organizational resources represents an important variable relevant to the potential for high-level exchange relations in loosely-coupled systems.

Apart from legal constraints on budget allocation, manager discretion over the use of funds may depend upon his or her relations with higher-level administrators. Thus, the established level of exchange at the boundaries of a focal unit may represent an organizational influence on

internal exchange potential. Boundary relations relevant to superior-subordinate exchange would include both formal administrative relations and relations with other outside parties who provide or influence resources valuable to subordinates.

The change in authority relations with manager succession in the gypsum plant studied by Gouldner suggests that loose coupling between higher authority levels may be a condition of informal exchange at the lower, management-worker level. Old Doug's exchange-based power over subordinates depended upon nonscrutiny by higher management. His successor was not allowed such autonomy, as we might expect generally when individuals assume new administrative positions; and he was forced to use formal control structures. (Of course, the potential for establishing exchange-based power was further constrained by the lack of foundation for subordinate trust.) We might assume that Old Doug's autonomy was based, in part, on his own history of exchange with superiors -- which, in turn, allowed him greater control over organizational resources and less fear of sanction than his successor. To the extent that administrative levels become more tightly coupled, during periods of succession or through central policy mandates, we would expect reduced potential for internal organizational exchange processes.

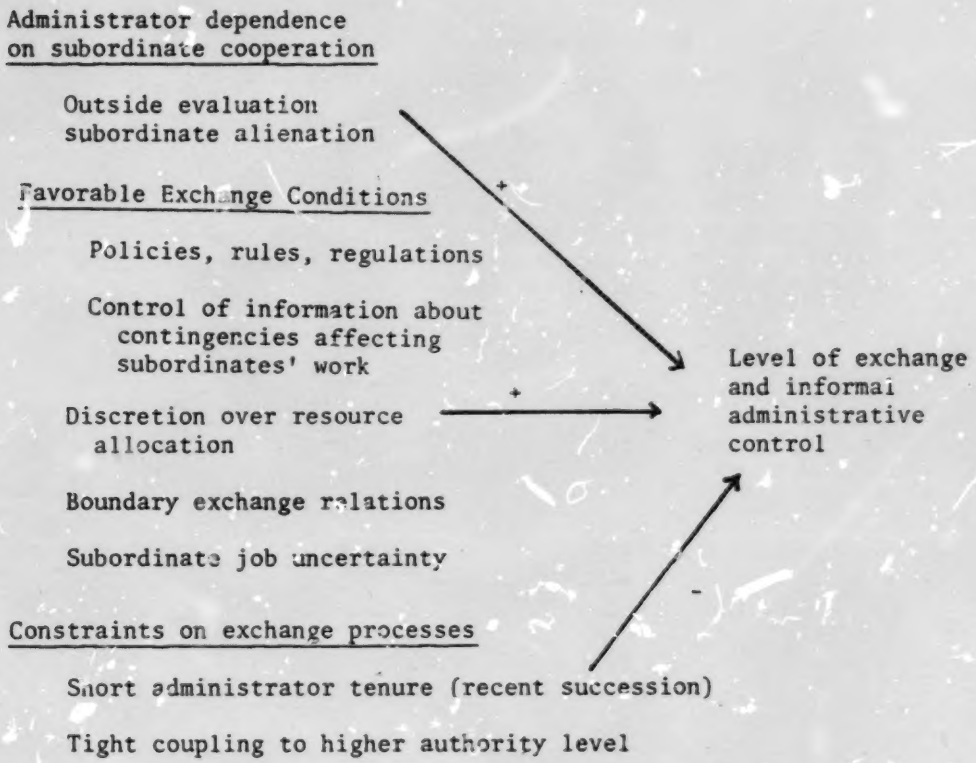
An additional variable relevant to the potential for establishing exchange-based power is suggested by the structural-contingency approach to organizational power (Thompson, 1967). The approach stresses the role of "uncertainty management" for establishing the distribution of power among organizational units and actors. Applying this principle to authority relations, we can argue that 1) areas of job uncertainty represent focuses for administrator-subordinate exchange and 2) the degree

of job uncertainty is likely to condition the potential for exchange-based power in loosely-coupled systems. Job uncertainty might derive from inherent ambiguity of work processes, disrupted work routines, changes in work goals or standards, unstable resource flows, and insecure employment conditions. Variation in the level of job uncertainty in loosely-coupled organizations -- over time or across units within a context -- should represent variable potentials for administrative power to be generated through superior-subordinate exchange.

This discussion has identified a range of organizational variables which might determine the level of exchange between authority levels in loosely coupled systems. As noted in the discussion of administrative-control perspectives, the theoretical literature on loosely-coupled systems suggests that exchange relations are likely to be established at low levels within these organizational contexts. Low formal interdependence and control between levels of the organizational hierarchy generally should weaken the tendency for informal, exchange-based interdependence to evolve. Constraints on exchange processes may be weakest for these contexts, but administrators would be uninterested in augmenting their power vis-a-vis subordinates and exchange resources may be less available than in more tightly-coupled organizations. Thus, variables proposed to affect this pattern include organizational conditions which might increase administrators' 1) dependence upon subordinate cooperation, such as outside evaluation; and 2) control over exchange-relevant resources, such as proliferating regulations, budgeting discretion, and subordinate job uncertainty. Additional factors which might constrain exchange processes, such as limited administrator tenure, were also noted. These sets of variables and the general argument regarding their relevance to informal exchange and power are represented in the

following diagram.

Diagram 1: Factors proposed to influence the level of exchange-based power in loosely-coupled systems.



The diagram proposes that longitudinal or cross-sectional variation in these organizational conditions would yield different levels of informal interdependence and administrative power within contexts generally identified as loosely-coupled systems. Superior-subordinate exchange relations would vary around the routine, low-level exchange of particular resources valued in a given context. Thus, analysis of variable exchange relations within an organizational context would refer to bases for interdependence established by specific work processes and traditions.

The remainder of the paper offers a social-exchange view of administrator-teacher relations in U.S. public schools. Conditions are identified which might produce school variation in, and generally higher levels of, exchange-based administrative power within the educational system.

Exchange and Authority in the Schools

As I have implied, educational organizations in the U.S. may be particularly suited to a social exchange view of authority relations. Lacking mechanisms of formal organizational control, school principals' authority over the instructional activities of teachers may depend heavily upon negotiating "rights of influence" through exchange processes. While institutionalized rules, norms and professional commitment may assure adequate teaching performance (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), higher levels of involvement and cooperation with central administrative directives may be predicated upon principal behavior. The level of teacher-principal exchange, loyalty, and trust may be an important variable in effective school administration under current conditions of U.S. education.

The preceding discussion suggested general organizational influences on the exchange relationship between a superior and subordinates. Applying the argument to the schools, we can identify a number of factors which would increase the potential for high-level exchange, or the principals' capacity to offer resources valued by teachers. These include 1) the existence of centralized educational policies and directives for teacher behavior, the relaxing or defying of which would enhance the obligations of teachers, 2) principal integration with central office personnel, who could provide information and/or resources not widely available, 3) budgetary slack and allocation discretion, and 4) principal integration with the local community,

e.g., established ties and authority with parent groups. Each of these factors would provide bases for resource offering to teachers; say, reducing the costs of complying with a new rule for record keeping, obtaining specialists to assist with the instructional problems, establishing boundaries on parent involvement in teaching matters. The general argument suggests further that such exchange dynamics would occur especially where administrators are subject to outside evaluation, e.g., review by state program evaluation teams, and where tenure is established and procedural rules are not tightly enforced by district administration.

Schools which vary along these organizational dimensions should vary, on average, in their established levels of principal-teacher exchange and -- by implication -- interdependence and principal power. School research literature suggests the nature of routine principal-teacher relations and, thus, the foundation for enhanced levels of exchange. Presumably, increased interdependence would build upon expected and typical resource offerings by a principal. Further, the kind of resources involved in the routine relationship would represent central values within the teacher subculture. Organizational conditions which increase teacher dependence in these areas of routine exchange, or which affect principals' capacity to offer the highly valued resources, should be central for distinguishing levels of exchange across schools. Thus, we need to consider the particular nature of principal-teacher relations in order to apply the general model to the public school context.

Routine Exchange

Conditions of teaching and the school social system effect some basic dependencies around which routine principal-teacher exchange relations can be established. Howard Becker's (1953) early sociological study of

Chicago schools identified a fundamental source of teacher dependence on the school administrator. He noted that the teacher relied on their principal to "back them up" against complaining parents and to support them in disciplining students. Thus, principals can guard the sometimes tenuous authority of teachers by serving as a buffer vis-a-vis other categories of actors. Presumably, this role establishes an exchange relation between principal and teachers, i.e., generates feelings of indebtedness and trust among teachers. In Schoolteacher, Dan Lortie (1975) pointed out the power-dependence implication of the principals' back up role:

> The authority and standing of the principal is a potential resource for the teachers, and so teachers have a stake in its use. One can see that teachers face a dilemma in the triad of teacher-parent-principal relationships. To obtain leverage or autonomy vis-a-vis parents, the teacher may rely on the principal to initiate contact or to serve as a buffer, thus indebting himself for favors received. Where parental relationships are troublesome, the teacher may find himself in a "double bind" situation in winning autonomy; to fend off parents' intrusions or gain their assistance, he may have to accept a greater deal of control from the principal; the principal, after all, may collect his debts by expecting more compliance (p. 192).

Teachers regard principals who perform such a back-up role as "supportive". Intensive interviews with teachers from 12 California schools yielded four kinds of principal "support" routinely identified as important: back-up with parents, back up with student discipline, provision of instructional materials, and keeping informed and interested in classroom instruction. (Butterworth, 1980). The first two items confirm the early observations regarding teachers' dependence on principal back-up. The latter two items indicate the potential for exchange processes within the instructional domain. The wording of teachers suggests preference for a collegial role, rather than an instructional-manager role. This observation is consistent with earlier research

on the principal-teacher relationship (cf. Bidwell, 1965: 1015) and with our argument that principal power is generated through exchange processes rather than being derived from formal authority.

In sum, principal-initiated exchange -- the offering of valued resources to teachers -- may occur in two broad domains. A routine exchange relationship may be based upon reliable principal back-up vis-a-vis parents and students and/or upon assistance with classroom instruction. Presumably, principal-initiated exchange in both domains would establish a high degree of teacher dependence, trust, and desire to reciprocate by cooperating with administrative requests. Bidwell (1965), in summing up the literature on authority relations in the school, suggests the potential administrative gains for principals who establish high-level exchange relationships with their teachers:

> The principal, to the extent that he can maintain both collegial ties to his teachers and a commitment to system-wide policies, may be especially effective in his role ...(Administrators) may .. attempt to develop a loyal following among teachers who then may be responsive to control by requests rather than orders (p. 1015).

School Differences

The principal roles conducive to high-level exchange relationship with teachers may vary with school conditions. We can assume that "back-up" and instructional support are universally valued by teachers; however, specific values are likely to be predicated on actual job conditions. The issue is fundamentally a question of what structures, or established patterns of administration, provide the support desired by teachers.

A recent secondary analysis of data on 48 Bay Area schools (Salomon, King and Yuen, 1980) sheds some light on this issue. The analysis revealed that school conditions and administrative patterns interact in relation to the teachers' morale. In relatively traditional schools (with standard

instructional practices and funding arrangements), principal enforcement of extensive school policies and discussion with teachers about instruction were associated with teacher morale. In complex schools (with intensive instructional technology and multiple funding sources), a principal's reliance on school policy was negatively associated with teacher morale. Instead, a high level of principal involvement in instruction (discussion, advising, and offering help) distinguished the high-morale from the low-morale schools.

Thus, school policy may be an adequate structure for teacher back-up with parents and students when the program is relatively simple (and, perhaps when the student population is relatively homogeneous). In such schools, a principal's openness to discussions with teachers about classroom matters may provide adequate additional resources to establish an exchange relationship which represents mutual trust, satisfactory teacher effort and willingness to comply with principal requests.

This structure may be insufficient to provide the back-up and professional resources valued by teachers in a complex instructional environment. As suggested by the general organizational argument, the higher level of job uncertainty may be an important basis for enhanced principal-teacher exchange in these contexts. The data suggest that both the nature and level of exchange potential differ between the more and less traditional schools. The principal's more intensive involvement in instruction in the complex schools may work two ways: to yield the kind of information needed for effective back-up in the setting and to provide the kind of instructional support required by most teachers.

Such notions about school differences in the nature of viable exchange relations need to be tested through additional research. It is quite likely

that as work conditions vary across schools or change over time, the resource needs of teachers -- and the appropriate administrative structures -- also change. Principals concerned with establishing exchange relationships with their teaching staff would need to be cognizant of teachers' job uncertainties, or contingencies affecting work in the school, and establish routine ways of providing valued resources.

This discussion of the nature of principal-teacher exchange relations suggests teacher dependences and values in terms of which variable levels of exchange can be established among U.S. schools. We would expect that principals who have not established viable patterns of exchange in the central domains of back up and instructional support would be severly handicapped in efforts to obtain cooperation from their teachers. The remaining discussion considers ways in which current educational conditions represent bases for higher-level exchange between principals and teachers and, thus, allow for greater school variation in interdependence between authority levels.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Two current conditions of U.S. public education suggest the possibility of a drift toward tighter, exchange-based coupling between levels of the system. One is a general condition of educational decline: declining school age population, unstable fiscal support, declining public support of educators, and declining teacher morale (cf. Calfee and Pessirilo-Jurisic, 1980; Tyack, Kirst, and Hansot, 1980). The other is a trend in educational governance toward both increased centralization and decentralization -- as Federal and State policies and programs proliferate and as accountability is channeled to local constituencies. Each condition provides bases for enhanced interdependence between local administrators and teachers and opportunities

for a principal to initiate higher-level exchange. The argument emphasizes the increasing legitimacy needs and complexity of the school social system.

Educational Decline

Broad demographic and economic trends have fostered a general decline in public support of U.S. education. The current state of affairs is not unlike the crisis in confidence affecting American institutions generally (see Janowitz, 1980, for discussion of broad social trends). In so far as teachers' working conditions are affected by declining public trust, the trend has implications for authority relations at the local school level.

An important effect of recent challenging of the educational system is the threat to teachers' job security. School system budget uncertainties and school cutbacks have resulted in massive lay-offs of low-seniority teachers. In the State of California, a substantial proportion of the teaching force annually receives warnings that their positions may be cut. Thus, budgetary contingencies are channeled down to the teaching force -- and manifest as insecurity and demoralization within the schools (see Hannan, and Freeman, 1979, for an analysis of cutbacks by budget category).

While job insecurity cannot be handled directly by a school principal, information available to "system-integrated" principal may be valued by the staff. The negative consequences of uncertainty may be offset partially by a principal's offering of "inside" information on alternative budgetary packages under consideration, for instance. As with many of the exchange opportunities considered subsequently, the principal's ability to offer such informational resources depends upon ongoing relations with higher-level administrative personnel. In this case, he or she would need an established, reliable source of information on fiscal and personnel matters.

Challenges to public education also threaten the professional authority and autonomy of teachers. As the system's effectiveness is questioned and as particular school programs and teaching practices become topics for public debate, parents' and students' deference to teachers' expertise may lessen. Further, the legitimacy crisis comes in the wake of a programmatic reform movement which generated numerous categorical programs and dissatisfaction among both target and "unserved" constituencies. Thus, teachers and administrators face demands for special, improved educational programs amidst complaints over the general quality of instruction. Teacher demoralization is likely to accompany diminished student involvement and/or increased parent criticism and complaints.

The exchange opportunity represented by legitimacy problems lies essentially in the increased teacher dependence upon a principal's buffering role. An upsurge in parent complaints and/or student "discipline" problems allows a principal more visibility in the teacher back-up role; though, of course, low resource offering in this domain would cripple the principal-teacher exchange relationship. More widespread challenging of teachers' authority might be dissipated by a principal who demonstrates loyalty and deference to the teaching staff. To the extent that such public displays boost teacher authority in a school we would expect indebtedness on the part of teachers and greater willingness to cooperate in school activities. As proposed in the general organizational schema, an administrator's integration in the community -- or viable exchange relations with key boundary units -- represents an opportunity to enhance relations with the staff. The local credibility and authority of the principal would serve as a resource with which to

manage parent and student perceptions of the teaching staff.

Finally, system budget cuts decrease allocations to schools for purchasing materials, services and staff for school programs. Not only does this reduce classroom resources available to teachers but it often expands the normal teaching role. For example, an elementary teacher may be expected to add music to her or his normal subject load when the school cuts its music program to accommodate budget restrictions.

Again the principal's boundary-spanning relations become relevant to enhancing the exchange relationship with teachers. His or her ability to acquire special district resources, e.g., a specialists' assistance or special program funds, may depend upon established linkages with central office personnel who control the flow of information and resources to the schools. A principal who is not well integrated in the larger organizational system may lack access to resources which reduce the costs to teachers of diminishing school budget allocations. The exchange potential of outside linkages may counter a general decline in schools' discretion over budget allocations.

A rather different set of conditions, and opportunites for enhancing interdependence through exchange processes, is represented by changes in educational governance.

Trends in Educational Governance

Education reform efforts over the past couple of decades have considerably increased the complexity of most urban schools. Federal and State legislation generated a wide range of programs addressed to special student categories (see Tyack, Kirst, and Hansot, 1980 for a broader discussion of the recent centralization trend). New instructional programs were established in the schools and, in turn, teaching credentials and

school staffs differentiated. In effect, the social systems of a growing proportion of U.S. schools have become increasingly complex in recent years.

Staff differentiation, including more widespread use of classroom aids, inevitably creates interaction problems. The "normal" elementary school teacher now must relate to a range of special teachers and aids in order to coordinate the movement and management of pupils. Conflicts may arise regarding appropriate roles of different personnel, and domain negotiation may or may not be handled successfully by the parties presumed to cooperate in the teaching enterprise.

These conditions of the schools' social systems affords principals the opportunity to assume a new role as internal mediator. As with the buffering role traditionally played for teachers vis-a-vis parents and students, the principal may establish and protect domains of action for personnel categories. Such an administrative role would help to define the limits of competing claims to authority and to reduce the threat, conflict, and confusion of an differentiating social system.

However, this principal role would depend upon rather intimate knowledge of classroom practices, teachers and students. Since many principals lack such immersion in the instructional program of their schools, the feasibility of increasing exchange through staff mediation may be limited. The data on teacher morale in complex schools (Salomon et al., 1980) suggest that principal involvement in instruction may represent a considerable resource for teachers in such contexts. As more schools have become complex and as problems of decline compound the instruction-related problems, principals may be forced to increase exchanges in the instructional domains of their teaching staffs.

The elaboration of programs and personnel in the schools has been accompanied by a proliferation of centralized rules and requirements. Some of the regulations, such as the intensive record-keeping requirements of some programs, affect teachers. Clearly, these are costly in time and effort; they may diminish instructional time and are likely to be resisted by teachers.

The development of a bureaucratic rule system clearly represents an exchange opportunity for prinicipals. A principal is in a position to relax central directives. If teachers consider a rule or regulation unnecessary and costly, the principal's defiance of the mandate if likely to be met with gratitude. As argued earlier, established tenure and integration in the larger system may be a condition of such defiance. The principal would need to know the minimal compliance requirements and have enough security in the system to afford reprimand for marginal compliance. Thus, again, exchange relations outside the system could provide information and social support needed to improve exchange relations with teachers.

One additional, and more recent, trend in educational governance may represent enhanced exchange potential at the local school level. This is the so-called "decentralization" trend, represented by central mandates for participation of parents, teachers, and often students in school educational programs. California's School Improvement Program is a case in point, with school site councils authorized to develop plans for instructional improvement. While widespread involvement of local constituencies is rare (Izu, 1980), members of the broader community increasingly have formal authority to affect their school's instructional program.

The right of parents to become involved in instructional matters may well represent a threat, or source of job uncertainty, to a teaching staff.

A principal's capacity to anticipate and manage potential problems may become an increasingly valuable resource for teachers. A variety of strategies might be used to delimit the roles of "outside" parties and back-up the professional authority of teachers. For example, a principal might define the site council's role as "advisory", with decision-making rights reserved for the teachers. Presumably, such displays of loyalty and mediating competence would enhance the exchange relationship between a principal and teachers.

Summary and discussion

In sum, the dual trends of educational decline and centralization of the U.S. public school system affect local school conditions. The specific effects noted here represent exchange-relevant variables identified in the more general discussion of loosely-coupled organizations: increased job uncertainty, elaboration of centralized rules and regulations, and reduced discretion over budget allocations. The first two conditions represent increased exchange potential, while the third might constrain the exchange process between administrators and their staffs.

On the surface, the trends might be seen as formalizing of principal-teacher relations -- generating a more bureaucratic from of control throughout the system. However, for at least two reasons this seem unlikely to occur. First, teachers generally resist strategies of bureaucratic control; and, particularly at a time when morale is low, principals risk losing rapport and influence with their staffs if they attempt to strictly enforce central mandates and accountability demands. Second, administrators are being held more directly accountable for instruction and are, thus, more dependent upon teacher cooperation. We would expect that principals would attempt to enhance their power vis-a-vis their staff by initiating higher-

level exchange relations. The school conditions highlighted in this discussion generally represent increased opportunity for a principal to move the routine exchange relationship to a higher level.

Principals are likely to show considerable variation in their capacity to enhance their power with staff through informal exchange processes. As noted, a principal's boundary-spanning relations -- integration with central administrators and influential community groups -- are important resources for managing internal exchange processes. Key job uncertainties, excessive bureaucratic rules, and resource constraints may be reduced by a principals' influence with outside parties. Since principals vary in their system and community integration, we would expect increasing variation across schools in the level of principal-teacher exchange. Further, given high turnover of school administrators, substantial proportions of principals may lack the history of routine exchange and teacher trust to generate high-level exchange within their schools.

On the whole, we could expect increasing interest in, and incidences of, tight coupling within the U.S. system -- through informal exchange processes at the local school level. A substantial drift toward interdependence between administrators and teachers would seem to depend upon both a change in district practices of rotating principals and greater awareness among principals of the exchange and power implications of school boundary-spanning relations. Whether or not enhanced principal power would be directed toward instructional control is an open question. The principal's role will require generally more information on teaching practices and, most likely, inclinations to affect practices will depend upon administrators' personal interests and the direction of central educational policy.

OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION

This paper considered alternative organizational perspectives on administrative control and power in order to characterize authority relations in U.S. schools and to assess the potential for tighter coupling within the educational system. Recent research and theory support growing consensus that U.S. schools are loosely-coupled organizations and resistant to centralized attempts to direct instructional practices. In part, this resistance is rooted in institutionalized patterns of school authority relations. As the centralization trend continues, however, its potential to disrupt school conditions and alter institutional patterns must be considered further. The analysis of authority relations and administrative power is one important line of inquiry.

The exchange-theory perspective on organizational authority was offered here as a reasonable approach to analyzing authority relations in loosely-coupled systems. The approach suggests that tighter coupling or interdependence, between authority levels may be generated through informal exchange of valued resources. Almost by definition, loosely-coupled organizations do not rely upon administrators' management of work activities, whether supported by formal control structures or exchange-based power. However, where or when administrators become unusually dependent upon subordinate cooperation, we could expect exchange processes to be initiated. Demands for greater accountability in loosely-coupled organizations may create this basis for enhanced interdependence and administrative power. The potential for administrators to generate high-level exchange relations in these contexts is likely to depend upon a range of organizational conditions. Specific conditions suggested by

the organizations literature were reviewed. They include work process, system, administrator, and social-context variables which influence the likelihood that administrators can and will offer rescources valued by subordinates. The empirical meaning of these variables within any given context would derive from the typical nature of subordinates' job uncertainties and authority relations. Historical and/or organizational conditions affecting these basic context parameters might alter exchange levels and administrative power within the context.

The social exchange approach to analyzing interdependence between authority levels of U.S. schools built upon descriptions of routine principal-teacher relations. The research literature suggests that administrator back-up and, depending upon the teaching environment, more or less active instructional support centrally define school authority relations. Historical or organizational conditions which enhance administrators' dependence upon teacher cooperation and/or which enhance the value of either or both administrative roles should increase the general level, and variation, of interdependence across U.S. schools.

Current conditions of U.S. education -- the declining demographic, economic, and political base and features of the centralization trend -- would seem to enhance administrators' dependence upon staff cooperation. Further, these trends and their concomitants, such as staff and program elaboration, may increase or add to typical job uncertainties among teachers and enhance the value of administrator support roles. Thus, administrator-staff interdependence may increase generally, though unevenly as a function of local school conditions, within the U.S. educational system.

This analysis assumes that loose-coupling is not a fixed feature of U.S. educational organization nor a phenomenon dependent solely upon formal structure. Karl Weick's (1976) general statement on loosely-coupled systems explicitly recognized the potential for position interdependence based upon informal relations and interacting roles. Yet subsequent analyses of coupling patterns in U.S. schools have focused exclusively on formal structures for control and coordination. The standard organizational analyses assume that tighter coupling within the educational system depends upon changes in governance policy and practice, particularly upon increased central evaluation and sanctioning systems. Tighter coupling of the U.S. educational system may occur through changes in formal structure; however, the impact of such changes would surely be mediated by authority relations at the school level. In assessing the potential for increased organizational control of instruction we cannot neglect institutionalized norms and patterns governing principals' and teachers' roles and relationships. These conditions of school authority relations are likely to constrain and condition the general response to central mandates and structures directed toward tighter coupling. Accountability schemes are likely to fail unless they enhance existing dependencies between teachers and school administrators. These dependencies center on school-community and teacher-student relations and on informal principal roles relevant to these domains of school social systems. The social-exchange view of administrator-staff relations emphasized local variability in the potential for high-level interdependence and suggests that school authority relations are not highly amenable to centrally-planned change.

The school organizations literature generally has ignored the possibility that system and contextual changes have had unplanned and unanticipated consequences for school authority relations. This paper suggested the possibility that administrators are gaining control over educational programs and practices by meeting new or enhanced dependencies among school staffs. The central argument was that tigher coupling within the U.S. educational system may depend upon, and be proceeding through, informal processes of exchange between authority levels.

This prognosis for change in school organizational patterns offers a less discouraging view of future school environments then that offered recently by Wise's (1979). He suggested that:

> The ad hoc repair of the operating educational system by policy making system appears destined to continue unabated. Efforts to make schools and colleges more equitable or more productive will continue to result in the central determination of policy. In this process, the bureaucratic conception of the school will be strengthened. While educators may be inclined to resist the excessive rationalization of their activities, they likely cannot resist forever. (p. 200).

The social-exchange assessment of school organizational change does not compete with the rationalization arguments put forth by those concerned that the schools not come to resemble factories. Indeed, principals may direct their enhanced power toward "rationalizing" teaching practices in accord with central-system goals or ideology. But the analysis does not imply such a consequence of tighter coupling of school authority relations. If any image of future school environments is to be derived from the social-exchange analysis in this paper it is one of enhanced school "ethos". Greater interdependence between administrators and their staffs would require and further a shared, local sense of belonging to an educational enterprise. Energy, as well as tighter coupling may be generated

by conditions which enhance principals' and teachers' perceptions of their natural division of labor and common aims.

The propositions advanced in this paper could be tested by comparative research on schools and within other loosely-coupled organizational contexts. Such analyses could assess the long-term implications of contextual change and central-system adaptations by contrasting organizational units more and less immediately affected by ongoing trends. Unless we can assume that loosely-coupled systems are infinitely adaptable but fundamentally unchangeable, or that tight coupling will proceed only through formal policy and practice, such analyses will be important for understanding organizational change within loosely-coupled contexts. Research should be grounded by contextually-sensitive conceptions of organization and attend to unanticipated consequences of broad socio-economic trends and system adaptations.

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